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The LEGO Group – a family business

The LEGO Group has been a family-owned business for three generations, and its primary goal has always been to provide top-quality toys to children around the world.

Ole Kirk Christiansen began as a carpenter in Billund, Denmark. At 41 years of age, he switched his focus from large construction to much smaller scale projects. He didn't know it at the time, but when he began making wooden toys in 1932, he laid the foundation for one of the world's most successful toy companies.

One of the first toys Ole Kirk Christiansen made was a wooden yo-yo. It was very popular among the children of the day, but interest eventually waned, and the toy manufacturer was left with a problem: What to do with a warehouse full of yo-yos that no-one wanted to buy? The solution he found was to separate the yo-yos into two halves and use these as wheels on the next toy. This indomitable and creative approach characterises the LEGO® family: There are no problems – only challenges.

"LEGO" is born

The LEGO name came into being in 1934. Ole Kirk Christiansen had offered a bottle of wine to the employee who came up with the best name for the company. In the end, he was able to claim the prize himself. By combining the Danish words 'leg godt' (play well), he created a name which was later to become globally renowned.

What Ole Kirk Christiansen did not know was that "Lego", translated from Latin, means "I put together", which is a precise description of the function of LEGO bricks.

Enduring quality

"The best isn't good enough" has been the LEGO Group motto since 1936, and the philosophy behind the toy loved by children around the world. The motto also underscores the quality of the LEGO brick, which has proven its durability over 51 years. The first "modern" LEGO bricks from 1958 can still be easily combined with bricks produced today. The only difference is that a new and better plastic material began to be used in 1963.



Fairytale growth

The wooden toys Ole Kirk Christiansen began making in the 1930s were popular among Danish children. When he took a chance in 1947 and purchased a plastic injection moulding machine from England for 30,000 Danish kroner, a fifth of the company's annual earnings, he laid the foundation for a toy producer fairytale that has not been equalled since.

The new toys quickly became popular. After four years of production, half of the toys being produced were made of plastic. 1:58 pm on 28 January 1958 was a

watershed moment in the history of the LEGO Group. This is when the patent application for the LEGO brick we know today was submitted to the patent office in the Danish capital of Copenhagen.

The company has seen rapid development since that time. A factory fire in 1960 resulted in the decision to abandon wooden toys and focus exclusively on plastic toys. Godtfred Kirk Christiansen had taken over responsibility for the LEGO Group from his late father a few years previously. He continued development of the LEGO Group for the next 20 years, and ensured that LEGO products spread far beyond Denmark's borders.

Godtfred's son, Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, took over the leadership in 1979. During the 25 years in which he led the company, the LEGO Group developed into a global brand. Minifigures were "invented" under his tenure, and well-known LEGO themes such as LEGO City, Castle and Pirates saw the light of day.

New millennium – new challenges

Following the original decision to focus on the LEGO brick, the company marched relentlessly forward. The LEGO Group exceeded all expectations over the next 40 years, and continually grew in size. It was only in the beginning of the new millennium that a wall was hit. The company was making losses, and had to navigate through an economic storm unlike anything it had seen before. In 2004, the leadership (headed by Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen) initiated a comprehensive plan which brought the LEGO Group out of the crisis over the next two years. Jørgen Vig Knudstorp, one of the key architects of the plan, was appointed as the new CEO in late 2004. The LEGO Group presented its best ever annual accounts in 2008, and while the rest of the world is experiencing a global financial crisis, the LEGO Group is seeing excellent performance and advancing on all its markets.

The LEGO Group is owned today by Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, his three adult children (one of whom, Thomas Kirk Kristiansen, sits on the board), and the LEGO Foundation, which owns one quarter of the company.





Interview with the Maersk Ship designer

Henrik Andersen is the man behind the LEGO® Maersk Ship. He designed the original model in his spare time, without realising it would later become a serious LEGO model.

How did the LEGO Maersk Ship come into being?

It all started when we received some elements for LEGO World City in 2002-2003, which gave me the idea of building a ship. It was mostly for fun initially, and I put the completed model on my shelf at work. I received a lot of positive comments about it, and one day some of these people contacted Maersk to ask if they might be interested in a LEGO Maersk ship, and they were! So I was given the task of making a LEGO Maersk ship, based on a real ship. It was a lot of fun to start with a real ship, and convert it into a LEGO ship.

What has it been like to work on the project?

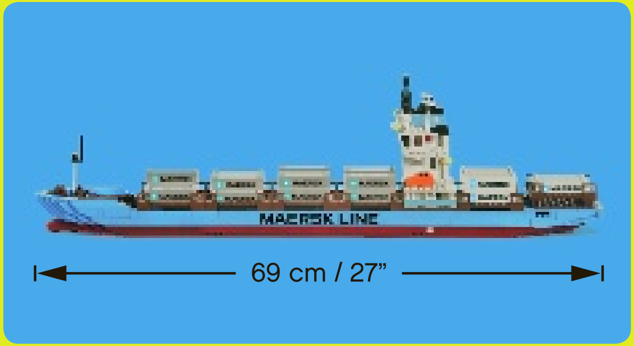
It has been fantastic! The ship was very different to the LEGO City models I design every day. I normally have one "special" project each year, and it was the LEGO Maersk Ship that year, which I really enjoyed.

Which aspect of the LEGO Maersk Ship are you most satisfied with?

The number of containers. We succeeded in squeezing 40 containers onto the ship, despite the fact that people from other departments kept saying, "do you really need to have so many?". Fortunately the ship was allowed to keep all these containers – even though it is a big job assembling them all.

What has been the most difficult thing about making the LEGO Maersk Ship?

The colour, without a doubt. The light blue Maersk colour is not one of the "traditional" LEGO colours. I therefore had to go down to a hobby shop and have paint mixed in the right colour, which I then used to hand-paint the first model of the ship. Fortunately we still had nine tonnes of plastic granulate with the correct light blue colour in storage at the time, so there was enough to produce the first limited-edition version of the ship. The light blue colour has since been added back into the LEGO range – but only for use in LEGO Maersk models.



The A.P. Moller - Maersk Group is a worldwide organisation with more than 100,000 employees and offices in around 130 countries – with global headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark. In addition to owning one of the world's largest shipping companies, we are also involved in a wide range of activities within the energy sector, terminal operation, retail and industry.







MAERSK

What is container shipping?

World trade would not be the same without the modern container, invented in 1956. Before then, transporting cargo by sea was both time consuming and expensive. Containers can be sealed and loaded intact onto container ships, railroad cars, planes and trucks - this has fundamentally changed the way we move freight.

Today, more than 90 percent of all goods in world trade are carried by container.

Did you know that?

- A single 20-foot container can hold about 48,000 bananas. So, in theory, a vessel such as EMMA MÆRSK can transport more than 525 million bananas in a single voyage - enough to give every person in the European Union a banana for breakfast.
- If all Maersk Line containers were placed one after the other, they would reach about 19,000 km. This is more than the distance from Copenhagen, Denmark to Perth, Australia, via Cape Town, South Africa - or almost half of the earth's circumference.
- If all the Maersk Line containers were stacked on top of each other they would reach approximately 2,500 km high. The same as stacking 8,550 Eiffel Towers on top of each other.



Carrying the world's goods

Maersk Line is the world's leading container shipping company. More than 500 vessels carry almost 2 million containers around the globe.

Moving goods by sea is the most energy efficient and environmentally friendly way to transport cargo. In fact, driving 15 km from your house to the electronics store will produce more CO_2 than it took to transport a flat screen TV produced half-way across the world to the store.



EMMA MÆRSK is ONE of the largest containerships in the world.

EMMA MÆRSK

- EMMA MÆRSK can carry more than 12,000 20-foot containers. If put on a train, it would be 71 kilometres long.
- The anchor weighs 29 tonnes or the same as five adult African elephants.
- The main engine produces 109,000 horsepower, equal to that of 1,156 family cars.
- Combined, the accommodation and bridge of EMMA MÆRSK are as high as a 12-storey building.

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